'yes' or 'no' because I had some discussions in this matter, which we are taking up with the Government in a different way. Till that is over, he should not comment.

If he wants to say something else, that is different. *(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): Madam, I am tongue-tied. But, my heart is with Mr. John.

श्री संघ प्रिय गौतम: इसको डेफर कर दीजिए, फार इनडेफिनेट पीरियड।

उपसभापति: ऐसी इररिस्पांसिबिल बात मत करिये, डेफर कर दीजिए।

because both the Houses of Parliament have constituted several committees. It is not just this Government which is concerned with this, but it is ...*(Interruptions)*... It is not only this Government, but the previous Government also had this problem. *(Interruptions)* So, we will discuss this matter and take it up tomorrow. *(Interruptions)*

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी: जो तनख्वाह बाकी हैं मिनिस्ट्री में वह पैसा भी दिला दीजिए ना। आप बोलिए, आपने अभी हां किया है।

उपसभापति: इनका दिल आपके साथ है और दिमाग आपके साथ नहीं।

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी: जो वर्कर्स के स्टैटुटरी ड्यूज हैं, जो तनख्वाह बाकी हैं। ...(**व्यवधान**).. आप हंसकर बोलिए ना। उन कम्पनियों की जो तनख्वाह बाकी है जैसे ईपीईएमएल उनकी तनख्वाह दिला देंगे, वह एश्योरेंस भी दे दीजिए, हंसकर बोलिया ना।

श्री सिकन्दर बख्त: सदर साहिबा, मैं यह कहना चाह रहा हूं कि हमारे कुछ मोहतरम दोस्त ऐसे हैं जो समझते हैं कि यह कह दिया और उन्होंने अपना फर्ज पूरा कर लिया और जहां तक आवाज पहुंचनी थी, वहां पहुंचा दी। जो हम पर गुजर रही है वह तुम्हें क्या मालूम है।

†[آخری سکندر بخت: صدر صاحبہ میں یہ کہنا چاہ رہا ہوں کہ ہمارے کچھ محترم دوست ایسے ہیں جو سمجھتے ہیں کہ یہ کہہ دیا اور انھوں نے اپنا فرض پورا کر لیا اور جہاں تک آواز پہنچنی تھی وہاں پہنچا دی۔ جو ہم پر گزر رہی ہے وہ تمہیں کیا معلوم ہے۔]

†[ ]Transilteration in Arabic Script

उपसभापति: सिकन्दर बख्त साहब का यह कहना है कि इनका दिल आपके साथ है और दिमाग अपनी मिनिस्ट्री के साथ है। He feels that his mind is not here. Now, we are having the half-an-hour discussion.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

On Points Arising out of Answer to Starred Question No. 422 given on 16th July, 1998 regarding growth of fisheries wealth

SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN (Kerala): This Half-an-Hour discussion is related to a very important problem faced by the fishermen in our society. There are nearly 2 million fishermen families in our country. They are facing serious problem for their livelihood because of the introduction of large-scale fishing by big trawlers and it has an adverse impact on fishing.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): in the Chair.

Sir, the fishermen are totally different from others in our society. For example, if a worker is working in a factory, he has to interact with others on the way to his factory, he has to board a bus or walk through a street or something like that. Fishermen do their work in the sea. Their interaction with the society is comparatively less. They are the most exploited section of our society. They are the most backward in our society. So, this is a matter which is very much concerned with the most backward section of our society. But if you go into the history of our freedom movement, the fishermen community resisted the foreigners under the leadership of Kunjali Maraikar. It is there in the history of Kerala that he

fought against the foreigners. The first violent fight against the foreigners was by Kunjali Maraikar, who was the Chieftain of fishermen in

Kerala. That tradition is there. But, unfortunately, their plight in the present situation is bad. Even in a State like Kerala where we have 100 per cent literacy, if you go and look into the affairs of the fishermen there, the literacy rate is less. And regarding population, in Kerala we have minus rate of population growth. But, if you go to the fishermen's villages, their population is growing like anything because they are totally out of our civilization. So, due importance should be given for them and their problems. Here, Sir, even the hon. Supreme Court—in 1993 there was a discussion regarding the plight of traditional fishermen—in their verdict mentioned about the plight of fishermen as follows:

I quote:

> "Over the years while the population of the traditional fishermen has increased by more than 20.8 per cent, the average production of each fishermen declined by more than half, which resulted in 98.5 per cent of the fishermen population descending below the poverty line. While the traditional fishermen who constitute 89 per cent of the total fishermen-household caught a negligible quantity of fish, the mechanised fish gear operators who are very small in number have been taking away the bulk of the catch, viz., more than 92 per cent. This is having a fatal effect upon the lives and economy of the traditional fishermen giving rise to several incidents of breach of law and order."

The situation is like this. They are getting very minimum earnings from the catch. So, Sir, while taking any decision, the Central Government should think about the traditional fishermen and their problems. We have taken some steps. When the question of fishing comes in, the Government mainly thinks about the quantum of foreign exchange which could be earned through the export of fish. But, Sir, unfortunately, the situation is totally different.

From the time mechanised fishing came in, from the time we started permitting mechanised fishing, the condition of the common fishermen has been declining. For example, if you look at the figures, you find that the catch by the trawlers and purse-seiners has increased by 196 per cent. On the other hand, there has been a fall of 50 per cent in the catch by the small fishermen.

Today, nearly three lakh country-boats are going for fishing. Only 34,000 mechanised boats are there. But these 34,000 mechanised boats are squeezing out our fishing wealth. We have to think about that. But, unfortunately, the attitude of the Government is totally different.

What did the Government do? The Government decided to permit joint ventures is deep-sea fishing from 1991 onwards. As a result of this, our fishermen are facing serious problems. Most of them are not able to earn their livelihood. There is no fixed hours of work for them. Eight hours. Fourteen hours. Twenty hours. They work like this. Their plight is very, very sad. Unfortunately, the Government took a decision to introduce big vessels. The Government decided to permit the big vessels into this area. What was the reason? It was part of the new economic policy. Actually, if you look at the international scenario in the matter of fishing, you find that during the 80's, there was a sharp fall in fish-catch. There was a sharp fall in the international production. Therefore, they decided to come to India. The Government took the decision, as part of the new economic policy, as I said. The Government gave permission to the leasing of foreign vessels for operation in the Indian Exclusive

Economic Zone in regard to fishing, processing and marketing. As a result of this, the condition of the fishermen community further worsened.

The arguments given out by the Government were, firstly, that this would increase the fish-catch up to the optimal level. This was the first argument. Secondly, they said that these big vessels would be operating only in the areas unreachable by the Indian vessels. Thirdly, they said that it would give more foreign exchange for our country. But, Sir, if we look at the record, we find that, unfortunately, none of these objectives has been achieved in practice. This is the reality.

The need for this discussion mainly comes from this experience. The living condition of the common fishermen is going down. The catch by the common fishermen is going down. They are not able to even carry on with their day-to-day life. In such a situation, the Government should do something favourable for the ordinary fishermen community. My intention in raising this discussion was to see that the Government comes forward with some proposals which would be helpful for the fishermen community. This was my intention in raising this discussion. When I am speaking here, on behalf of the fishermen community in our country, in my State, my thought is that something should be done by the Government for them. I am expecting something from the Minister.

Having said this as a preface, I would place certain questions before the hon. Minister for his consideration.

There is one other thing which is very important for the country-aquaculture. Aquaculture should be there. We are for acquaculture. In my State, Kerala, we have a plan called the 'people's farming programme'. There should be a pond in every house in every village. It will increase the fish catch. Unfortunately, our attitude is different. We promoted the aquaculture in a wide way. Especially in States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, It has created so many environmental and ecological problems. We promoted it in Orissa and Maharashtra. Actually, it has adversely affected our country. Now we are discussing about the fall in the production of foodgrains in our country. What kind of fields are we using for aquaculture? We are diverting the paddy fields for aquaculture. It would further worsen the foodgrains production, especially in the Godavari region which is the rice bowl of this country. We have a shortage of foodgrains in my State. Foodgrains are coming from the Godavari region. Unfortunately, that area is being diverted to aquaculture. The country is going to face the problem. The repercussion will be very serious. So, some attention should be given to this also. There was a strong protest by the people of Tamil Nadu. It has its ecological impact. Salining of water and land is going on. So, that also should be taken into consideration.

I will just put my question now. The first question is regarding the big vessels. The big vessels did not contribute to the output. Only a meagre part of the total fish catch is coming from the big vessels. What are they doing? Nobody knows what they are doing. They are doing it on the seas. I am not going there to see it. The same is true of the Minister. It is very difficult. Other activities are going on. Even drug-trafficing is going on. You have to check all these things. There were protests from fishermen, and the Government appointed a committee. The committee, after having sufficient discussions, gave its suggestions. The first suggestion was to ban the big vessels. My first question to the Minister is whether the Government will cancel all the permits issued for fishing to joint ventures, Dutch vessels and other leased vessels as recommended by the Murari Committee. Will the Government ban the big vessels? That is my question.

The second question is that a ban on trawling in the breeding season is very important. We did it in Kerala from 1991

onwards. There is a ban on the fishing activity by mechanised boats during the breeding season. Usually we are doing it. After we started this process, from 1991 onwards, there has been a sharp increase in the total fish catch. So, Sir, the Kerala Government has to come here every year. Usually it is banned from June 15 to July 29. I have already mentioned about this issue in this august House. The Kerala Government had sent its request in the month of June. This Government did not ban the big vessels from trawling. Actually, they should have been banned from June 15 onwards. This year the ban order was given by the Central Government only on July 15. There should be a ban on trawling by big vessels in the monsoon season which is the breeding season throughout the Indian coast. If we ban it only in Kerala, vessels from Mangalore will come, So, there should be a total ban in this period.

Thirdly, Sir, there are some welfare schemes for fishermen, It is a sort of saving-cum-relief scheme for fishermen.

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu): It comes under the Department of Agricuture.

SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Yes, and it should be part of that Department.

We have introduced the scheme in Kerala. Rs. 45 by the State Government Rs. 45 by the Central Government and Rs. 45 by the fishermen are contributed. The problem is very serious. Every year we have to request the Central Government for the implementation of this programme, as fishermen are exclude from the scheme. Sir, lakhs of women are engaged in this work. In Trivandrum, there are special buses for fisherwomen. There is a special bogey for fisherwomen from Kollam to Trivandrum, 80 miles away. They are now excluded from this scheme. The gender issue is a very serious one and we have been discussing it throughout the country. So, I demand that the fisherwomen are also included in this relief scheme. Those who are doing the backwater fishing i.e. the inland fishing, should also be included.

Sir, some aspects of fishing are under the Food Processing Ministry, while others are under the Agriculture Ministry. They should be under a single Ministry. In Kerala, we have a separate Ministry under the Fisheries Minister.

The ecological problem in the acquaculture, like salination of the land etc. should also be taken into consideration. The loss of mangroves, which is seriously affecting the ecological balance, should also be taken into consideration.

These are the issues which I have brought to the notice of the hon. Minister. I hope he will take concrete steps, not merely assurances, for improving the livelihood of the fishermen.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Shri Vayalar Ravi. The hon. Member is absent.

SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, the problem of fishing industry in India is a very complex one. Certainly the fishing production has doubled or trebled during the last couple of years. But, the problem is not merely of growth of fishing industry. The problem is whether this growth has benefited the poor fisherman, the average fisherman, in the coastal areas. That is the problem to be addressed by the House in this discussion.

Whatever facts have been brought to the notice of the House uptill now, show that the interests of the average fishermen in coastal areas are not being looked after properly either by their State Government or by the Act that we have got for the purpose. The benefits are, in fact, going to multi-nationals and large corporations engaged in the fishing industry. The benefits are going to those which are having the most advanced mechanised and motorised vessels. The local fishermen, who risk their lives for catching the fish, do not get adequate benefit. Moreover, there are various areas in our

country, which are being poached by big multi-nationals. Our Government has not been able to stop it. This is the problem being faced for quite some time. There is an Act to stop this poaching. We know our naval boats, search boats and police boats are expected to catch these poachers.

6.00 P.M.

But hardly any multinational company has been caught and brought to book and punished under the law. I do not think the Government have any statistics to show that they have taken action. I would request the hon. Minister to tell this House as to how many multinational companies have been caught while they were poaching the fish.

I would like to say that in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, it has been estimated that Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 crores worth of fish per day is poached. If this is a wrong estimate, I would like to be corrected. But this much is correct that every day crores worth of fisheries wealth is being poached. The question is: Can we stop it? The question is: Why have we not been able to stop this poaching? This poaching of fish is not only affecting the Indian fishing industry, but also an average fisherman, who at the risk of his life is going into the sea and trying to make a big catch.

The Government says that we have so many schemes and we have so many plans for fishermen. No doubt, there are plans and schemes for fishermen, but are they yielding results? The question is: Are we able to monitor these schemes? Are we able to implement these schemes? I would like to know whether these schemes have yielded any results and whether these could benefit the average fisherman.

The life-style of an average fisherman, in India, is just the same as it was about 50 years or 100 years back. There has not been much change in his life-style. Why is it so? We have heard that in several coastal areas, average fishermen have become poor because the population of fishermen has gone up and the area of fishing has gone down. The dependence on fishing industry of every fisherman has gone up, but their income has not gone up. His income is being shared by the middlemen. His fish is being poached by foreign vessels or by multinational companies.

The latest equipment should have been provided to the poor fishermen. I know that there are schemes which say that latest equipments will be provided to fishermen. But how much has been done in that area? How many fishermen have been benefited? Are their number in lakhs or in thousands or in hundreds? These figures have not been made available to us. (*Time-bell rings*) I will not take much time. I will take another two minutes.

I think fishing industry should grow in this country. It is an alternative food.It is a complete food. It has been acknowledge as one of the best foods in the world. Unfortunately, not much attention has been paid to develop fishing industry in this country. The reason is, those who are engaged in fishing trade or in normal fishing activities their interests have not been promoted. Unless there are schemes to promote the interests of the actual fishermen in the coastal areas, their living conditions will not improve. There are fishermen in the inland water areas. Their problems also should be looked into. I know that this question does not relate to that area. This question relates only to the coastal area. The States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal and maybe some areas of Gujarat come under coastal areas. By satellite imaging system we can know which area consists of more fish. If the Government pass on this information to the local fishermen, they can go into the sea and make a big catch. This information will help them a lot. Such help is only on paper. It is not really coming to the average fishermen. Only those who are big corporations or multinationals are

getting the benefits of the satellite imaging systems. Should not these benefits go to the local fishermen? Why are they not going there? How many centres have we established in the coastal areas to give this information to the local fishermen? There is no information. It should be regular, day-to-day information about fish because the fish move in herds every day. At this moment, a big fish herd may be there at one point. Tomorrow, they may move 50-100 miles away. Therefore, unless there is regular and correct information given to the local fishermen by the most modern methods, they will not be able to get the benefits, the benefits which are available to the big companies, to the big people or big fishermen who are using mechanised boats, trawlers, etc. Thank you Mr. Vice-Chairman.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL (Maharashtra): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, this discussion is very important because of the very fact that it has arisen out of a question raised a few days back. As you are aware, fisheries play an important role in our food production, food supply, generation of employment, generation of income and export promotion. The subject of fishery is not at all a new subject. It has been there from time immemorial in our country. There are various marginal and small fishermen and there are very big trawlers which are fishing in the deep sea. The question has arisen out of these two interests.

Sir, my information is that there is a potential of 3.9 million tonnes of fish in the 2.2 million square kilometers of our Exclusive Economic Zone. And who is catching more? About 93 per cent of the production is contributed by artisanal, mechanised and motorised boats whereas only seven per cent is from the deep-sea trawlers. This is the first thing we have to understand.

The second thing is this. What is deep-sea fishing? Some say that if we go beyond 50-70 metres, then we call it deep sea. If we use a vessel which is more than 20 metres in length, then we call it a big vessel. And if we restrain fishing to a vessel less than 20 metres in length and if it is done within 50-70 metres, it is a small vessel operation. There are traditionally a big number of small fishermen. Sir, a few facts will be very useful. The total coastal area is about 8129 kilometres; the shelf area is 0.45 million; the Exclusive Economic Zone is 2.2 million; the inland sector is 4.5 million potential; and the marine sector, 3.9 million. On the number of fishermen, there are more than six million people who are actively involved and crores are dependent on them. And they are poor. That is why we are giving more attention. Sir, the total traditional catch is 1,71,852 and the mechanised catch is 34,848. The marine production in 1995 was 2.69 million and the inland production was 2.9 million. There are two or three important things. One is deep sea fishing. As I have told you, the maximum catch is not from the deep sea. Only seven per cent of the catch is from the deep sea. There are joint ventures. There are private people owning big vessels. They are a real danger, according to me, to other countries rather than to India. They are fishing in the deep sea. The exploitation of fish is in the coastal area, viz. 12 kms. That is also overexploited. There are a number of fishing vessels and, therefore, the catch per vessel is becoming less and less. I think it is less than 15 kg. for a small boat and, therefore, the fishermen are very poor. There were two Committees appointed. One was the P. Murari Committee and another was the Unnikrishnan Committee. Both the Committees had visited the places, had interaction with the fishermen, their cooperatives and many other people-scientists, State Government officials, experts. They had made a number of recommendations. The first recommendations was that there should be a total ban on the permits issued to the big vessels and they should be cancelled immediately. Sir, in order to protect the interests of the small fishermen there should not be any renewal or extension of the permit of

the joint ventures which are indulging in deep sea fishing. There are many other points. One is about the aquaculture. As my friend has stated, ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): He has stated it.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: He has stated it, but there are so may people engaged in aquaculture.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): So far as aquaculture is concerned, you see whether the aquaculture is covered by the question; otherwise, the Minister will say that he requires a separate notice. ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: There is a brackish water. We put the seeds in the sea and they develop into big shrimps. That is also there. In aquaculture also there are problems. There is a Supreme Court decision regarding the CRZ. The second thing is that there is a virus disease that is affecting the fish and that is depleting the fish in the aquaculture area and that is adversely affecting our exports. Our export potential is at present 3 lakh tonnes and we are earning about 3,500 crores of rupees. But there are great difficulties. Last year we exported our marine products to the European countries. The bacteria, namely Salmonella and Vibroncila, were found in them. So, the European Union totally rejected the products worth 1,000 crores of rupees. The simple hygienic conditions are not observed in exporting the products. There is no fresh water to wash the fish when it is brought to the factories. There is a lack of infrastructure. There is a lack of cold storages. Sometimes, a cold chain should be maintained to bring fish from the sea to the factories. So, the infrastructure should be provided.

The other recommendation of the Committee is: "There should be research and, therefore, two universities should be established, one in the Eastern Coast and the other in the Western Coast." So many Ministries are concerned with the fisheries, the Ministry of Food Processing, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Oceanography, the Ministry of Commerce which comes in the form MPEDA, the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Ministry of Defence which comes in the form of coastal surveillance. If we want to really give some incentives for the development of fishing, there should be an integration and there should be only one Ministry to deal with the fisheries.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): He has already stated that.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: Let me make my suggestions, Sir. These things should be taken into consideration.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): The Minister has to reply.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: If my time is over, I will sit. Thank you

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Yes, your time is over.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): Sir, yesterday a precedent was created that everyone would put the questions and then the Minister would reply.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Yesterday the problem was different and the Minister had himself wanted it so. It was done for that purpose. You will put your questions after the Minister's reply. Mr. Fernandes, do you want to say anything.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: I wanted to say the same thing.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Yes, we are following that.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): Mr. Vice-Chairman,

Sir, the total number of fishermen engaged in inland marine fishing is 59.6 lakhs. The number of full-time fishermen is 23.9 lakhs, the number of part-time fishermen is 14.4 lakhs and the number of occasionals is 21.2 lakhs. There is a large number of people who are engaged in this profession. Any policy which is oblivious of the interests of these traditional fishermen would surely be found wanting and the basic thrust of the Government has to be that the interests of these traditional fishermen are protected. There can be no two opinions on that. So far as fish production is concerned, the figures given by Mr. Vijaya Raghavan are to be amended by me. The total share of traditional fishermen in the fish production is currently 34%. The total number of boats, which are traditional craft, is 1.91 lakhs. Out of that 35,000 are motorised. But this motorisation is limited to moving the craft. They really don't have the automatised or motorised fishing gear. It is only for the movement. They are clubbed with the traditional craft. In addition to this, there are 47,000 mechanised fishing boats. But they fish beyond the territorial waters in the economic zone and up to a depth of 50 metres. Their share in the production is 65%. The deep-sea fishing vessels, which are limited in number, have been given lease or licence or permission under the new deep-sea fishing policy of 1991. They have since been rescinded. Currently there are 19 joint venture vessels and 19 leased vessels which are in operation in the EEZ. There are only 38 vessels of these two classes. So, it is not a very large number. Out of 170 large fishing vessels, which are 20 metres in length, 70 shrimp trawlers are presently in operation and they are wholly Indian-owned. They are not owned by any multinationals or foreign companies. The annual harvest potential is estimated at 3.9 million tonnes and the current harvest is 2.9 million tonnes. As I have already stated, the contribution of the deep-sea fishing vessels in the current production is only one per cent. The major catch is by the mechanised boats from the 50-metre depth range and beyond. It is 65%.

Now I come to the points raised by Shri Raghavan. So far as diversion of paddy land to aquaculture is concerned, it is being sought to be regulated now. We are in the process of setting up an Aquaculture Authority. My Ministry has already cleared a bill in this regard and the Bill is under consideration. We will bring a bill before the Parliament in the next session. If need be we will think of other measures also.

But we cannot put a blanket ban because any economic activity which suits a person at the grassroot, he cannot be barred from going into that activity, though environmental considerations will be taken care of. The Aquaculture Authority Bill is being brought precisely with this objective in mind.

So far as coastal zone regulation is concerned, it is being monitored. The Aquaculture Authority Bill will take care of that. We are going in for having semi-intensive shrimp farming and aquaculture in this coastal zone. It will be regulated according to the carrying capacity of a particular area and its environmental impact. Up to 200 metres of the high tide line (HTL) no shrimp farming would be allowed to be set up, except some seed farms and that too in limited numbers because it occupies a very limited space. Semi-intensive aquaculture farms would be allowed between 500 and 200 metres of HTL. But the parameters of intensity would be established and every company and every entrepreneur going in for this would be required to adhere to the norms. If they don't adhere to the norms, they will not be allowed to do it.

This is being worked out. Rather it has already been worked out. Once the Aquaculture Authority comes into being it will monitor these things. All these rights would be given to the States. The States would be allowed to set up their own Aquaculture Authorities.

So far as his demand about cancelling the licences of vessels is concerned, I have already said that there are not many vessels now. This was also recommended. But it was thought appropriate that they should be allowed to be phased out. There are not many vessels. Then it cannot be done without legal implications. In view of the MZI Act of 1991 and rules and order thereunder and terms and conditions of approval, this can be done only in consultation with the Law Ministry. We are talking to the Law Ministry. But, as I said, they are not very big in number. Their share in the catch is also limited to only one per cent. But there are certain other issues connected with this.

The major issue is, currently, we have received information that Pakistan has entered into a contract with an American company known as Forbish and Co. They have allowed them to bring 200 large vessels for fishing in the deep sea. If we do not operate in the EEZ and beyond that on the high sea, those vessels would venture into and even the policing of the foreign vessels would be difficult unless our own vessels are there in the sea and in the process we will leave all the field open to foreigners. An apprehension was expressed that because of very heavy fishing in the deep-sea, shoal would not migrate to the coastal area. Traditional fishermen have expressed this apprehension. Even if it be so and if these vessels come there, this phenomenon will always be there. Therefore, now we are thinking of a policy to counter this threat because it will have certain other implications as well. Surveillance is being done by the State Police as well as the Coast Guard. But that may not be sufficient because all the time the Coast Guard does not have as many ships which are required. What we are thinking and what seems to be advisable is unless we have our own ships in the EEZ and in the deep sea area and if the Coast Guard also does not get proper information at an appropriate time, poaching will increase, as Shri Narendra Mohan has pointed out. So these are the issues which are keeping us engaged and we are thinking of coming out with a strategy. But naturally they would not, in any case, be allowed to fish in coastal zones that is, up to 12 nautical miles which is the area of traditional fishermen. They would never to be allowed to do that.

So far as the ban during the breeding season is concerned, we are doing this only in consultation with the States. Kerala has always been for it. Whenever they have sought for it, we have put a concurrent ban. We have also allowed them to put a ban. Gujarat also came in. Maharashtra came in. This year the Members are right that there was a delay in imposing the ban. But there was a valid reason. Somebody had gone to the High Court in Maharashtra and we were trying to know what would be the judgement. But later on, having consulted the Law Ministry, we imposed a ban with some delay. And in case Kerala or any other State is desirous of it, this delay will not occur in future. Putting a blanket ban on all the coastal areas may not be advisable—I have a full-fledged table of a study of breeding seasons of various species—because, it is not always commensurate with the monsoon season. There are certain fish which breed in October-November. Some of them breed in August-September and some of them in April-May. There is a complete list. But it will take time. There are hundreds of species and their productive seasons are staggered and varied. Therefore, we cannot put a ban unless a particular State asks for it. In fact, none of the Eastern coastal States have approached us for a ban. These include West Bengal, Orissa, or for that matter, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. They have never done so. Our impression is that they don't want this ban because all the time they are getting this catch. Therefore, it is not advisable scientifically. So far as the Fishermen's

Welfare Scheme is concerned and excluding women from it, I would like to say that there is no question of discriminating against women. Women have not been excluded as such. But it is a scheme meant for active fishermen who actually go for fishing. If a woman goes for fishing, she will be under the cover. But a majority of women are doing the fishing trade. They are selling fish. They are not going for actual fishing. But if some of them go, it is up to the States to identify them. They will also receive the benefit. One-third is contributed by a fishermen who is covered under this scheme, one-third is contributed by the respective State Government and another one-third is contributed by the Central Government. For eight months, his money gets accumulated and for the rest four bleak months during the monsoon period, it is paid as compensation because fishermen are out of job during this period. There is no intention as such to exclude fisherwomen. We have discussed this in detail. Shri George Fernandes, our Defence Minister, had brought this to my notice. Mr. Thomas Kochery, who was leading the agitation of fisherwomen who were seeking inclusion of fisherwomen as well under the scheme, came to Delhi. In my view, he got convinced with the details that I came out with. In fact, only the Kerala Government has asked for it. But for reasons known, it is not advisable because this has to cover active fishermen who go for fishing. And if women go, I repeat that they will be covered.

Mr. Narendra Mohan has raised the issue of poaching. This is being checked by the Indian Coast Guard in the exclusive economic zone and even in the area of Andaman and Nicobar Islands on a regular basis. Even the Police force of the resepctive States and Union Territories check this practice. But the point remains that unless there is a sizeable and effective presence of our own vessels in high sea and exclusive economic zone, policing cannot help and poachers would catch the fish and continue to get the benefit. We have come to know that fishermen of other countries also are coming to these zones off and on. Sometimes they have been caught. I don't have the figures as to how many of them have been caught and hauled up. But some vessels have been detained and they have also been confiscated ....*(Interruptions)* I shall give the figures later on. There is no problem about it.

Sir, so far as the promotion of actual fishermen is concerned, I have already underlined the need for it. Also, making them available the modern gadgets and passing on information through satellite communication are all being done. The fishermen are being informed about the movement and the location of the shoal, the depth of their movement in the sea as well as the distance from the boats. Recently we have received information that Bharat Electronics Limited, a Defence Ministry establishment, has come out with a gadget which can locate it. It is priced around Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 75,000. We are trying to find out if there can be a scheme of using this gadget at least in a group of boats so that information can be passed on the sea while the fishermen are fishing. At least a group of boats can be given such a gadget. We are also thinking of coming out with some kind of a subsidy scheme to make this gadget available. We are also thinking of upgrading the boats which are there, the mechanised boats of fishermen as well as the other mechanised boats, and fit them with these gadgets and also come out with another class of boats, the intermediate class, which can fish between 50 metre depth and 150 metre depth. There was a proposal by the Murari Committee. Everybody has talked about the Murari Committee. But the recommendation in this regard is self-contradictory. They want that the ban should be up to 100 nautical miles and 80; metre depth or 150 metre depth. But at 100 nautical miles, in some places the depth is 3,000 metre. So, this is self-contradictory. We are

evaluating it. These classifications and zoning will be done according to the requirements. We are trying to work out a model through the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology in Cochin, a model of an intermediate boat of around 15 metre length, which can fish in this intermediate zone and catch fish.

Dr. Gopalrao Vithalrao Patil had also brought in these points. But I think I have covered all of these. He talked about the disease in aquaculture farms. Yes, there was an incidence and it has now been tackled. Regarding establishment of universities and research centres, there is a proposal. We are working out a joint proposal with FAO to set up an institute and there are certain other proposals also. In Lucknow we are having one for conserving the genetic material of fish. It will be one of the largest gene banks in the world to conserve the fish genetic material. So far as the involvement of various Ministries, their overlapping and functioning at cross purposes is concerned, there is no such situation now. Since 1997, the Department of Deep Sea Fishing has been transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture. Now, the Ministry of Food Processing is not involved in it. So far as APEDA or MPEDA are concerned, they are for exports and deep sea fishing. The Agriculture Ministry is in full charge and we are in the full knowledge of all the phenomena and dimensions of the problem. With this perspective I think we are likely to work out a policy which has been in a shambles since the rescinding of the earlier policy. There is an urgent need to come out with a policy, particularly in view of the potent threat which is being posed by Pakistan's agreement with the American company. We have got to think about that because around one million catch, which we are not tapping, is a big loss to the nation and then there are also security and other complications.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: But you are not being proactive. You are reactive.

SHRI SOM PAL: I am saying I am being proactive. Earlier all of you wanted a ban. So, I am being proactive. Rather, you have been reactive that there should be a ban. It is the other way round.

MESSAGE FROM THE LOK SABHA

The Interest on Delayd Payments to Small Scale and Ancillary Industrial Undertakings Amendment Bill, 1998

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I have report to the House the following message received from the Lok Sabha signed by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha:

> "In accordance with the provisions of rule 96 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose the Interest on Delayed Payments to Small Scale and Ancillary Industrial Undertakings (Amendment) Bill, 1998, as passed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 29th July, 1998."

Sir, I lay the bill on the Table.

HALF AN HOUR DISCUSSION

ON Points Arising out of Answer to Starred Question No. 422 given on 16th July, 1998, RE. Growth of Fisheries Wealth (Contd.)

SHRI S. NIRAIKULATHAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, first of all I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on the problems of fishermen and also fisheries development. I wish to say a few words about the miserable conditions in which they live. The fishermen live in hutments, under thatched roof on the seashore. When heavy rains and storm lash the coastal areas, the thatched huts of the fishermen are damaged and washed away. Then they stand aghast and hapless without a roof over their heads. Having realised the pathetic plight of these fishermen, Dr. M.G.R., the political mentor of our